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ABSTRACT

This paper explores philosophical and procedural policy issues surrounding the introduction and development of a job enlargement form of career ladder. Acceptance, meaningful work, meaningful compensation, and job security without institutionalization comprise the philosophical issues that the school board and community, building level and central office administration, and teachers must deal with if job enlargement schemes are to be successfully implemented. Procedural issues that district policymakers must deal with include the ladder's height, eligibility to apply for career positions, and the selection process for career ladder positions. Framing these issues requires the acceptance of the following conditions by school district personnel: (1) different responsibilities and levels of compensation in a system that is traditionally and strongly egalitarian; (2) a system that has competition among teachers who normally only compete for a position at the time of hire; (3) a system which has limited security that must be earned by performance and peer acceptance; and (4) a system that may have limited union recognition. (JAM)

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Policy Issues To Consider In Adopting A Job Enlargement Based Career Ladder Program

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Policy Issues To Consider In Adopting A Job Enlargement Based Career Ladder Program

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to explore some of the critical policy issues which must be addressed in introducing and developing a job enlargement form of career ladder. It is not intended to be a step by step procedure for implementation; nor is it meant to identify the pitfalls which will be encountered when actually trying to implement a job enlargement program.

In order to fulfill this purpose, the issues which must be addressed have been categorized as:

* philosophical or belief driven issues, and
* operational or procedural issues.

The issues which have been categorized as philosophical are those that must be addressed at the outset of implementing a Career Ladder program. These issues are ones that must be reaffirmed constantly or consciously changed when necessary because they are the foundation upon which your career ladder program is built.

Operational issues though critical should be addressed only after a district has determined clearly why it has or even wants to have a career ladder program.

As with many of the things we do in education, there is not a right or correct answer. There is only a belief that the

decision made is the correct one at the time for the situation and the culture of the current organization.

Critical Philosophical Issues to Job Enlargements

Critical in implementing a Job Enlargement Career Ladder program is the belief in the concept and its implementation by the Superintendent. Without the superintendent's absolute commitment and genuine belief that the program is essential to the improvement of education within the district, none of the policy issues which must be faced have any meaning. The reason is that many of the policy issues that the superintendent will need to address challenge the basic foundation of the educational belief system. No other single person within the organization can replace the superintendent in this regard - not the Board nor the principal, nor the teacher. Half hearted support by the superintendent will only bring lip service by other groups and the program will disappear at the first crisis. The Superintendent is the spearhead for the program. He or she must shepherd the program through Board, administrative and teacher acceptance and during conflicts over priorities which will compete for the resources committed to career ladder.

There are four philosophical issues that must be addressed. These are:

* acceptance,

* meaningful work,
* meaningful compensation for the enlarged job, and
* security without institutionalization

Acceptance

Three groups must be accepting of the career ladder job enlargement concept before it can be successfully implemented. The groups are: school board and community, building level and central office administration, and teachers. Acceptance by each group is based upon the degree to which the group personally benefits from the concept.

School Board and Community. The issue that one faces in board and community acceptance of the job enlargement model of career ladder is measured by the dollars that both are willing to commit to the program. The commitment is not measured in good financial times but when there are tough times. When resources are tight the board and the community must make some fundamental decisions about what is most important to them. Remaining faithful to the concept through funding helps during these tight times to assure commitment by others. In order for this to happen, the board and the community need to see or feel that they see direct benefit to their students from the career ladder program. A critical ingredient is the belief that when students are not in school teachers are doing work that is meaningful to the education of all students. That is, when

school is out teachers are not sitting around drinking coffee.

A second aspect of this financial commitment is that teachers who are on career ladder are entitled to earn a salary that is comparable to other professions that work eleven to twelve months of the year. The belief by the Board and the community that the compensation a career ladder teacher is receiving is equaling the contribution the teacher is making.

Building level and central office administration. In the traditional educational system, the career ladder - job enlargement program was to move from a teaching position to some type of an administrative position. For that move a teacher was given additional responsibilities, a longer contract and, hopefully, greater compensation. The job enlargement model of career ladder challenges this past practice. Therefore, acceptance of the concept that a teacher can work longer, stay teaching and make as much or more than a principal is a difficult concept for many administrators, regardless of the number of years as administrators, to accept. The issue is one of salary gap. In the administrator's perception is the salary gap still large enough for the administrator to accept the concept of the career ladder. Or does it challenge what has been the perceived gap in salary and thus in some hidden way

challenge the status symbol that the individual places upon a position.

A second issue that is hidden within the administrative acceptance of the career ladder is one of authority. Does or is, the job enlargement career ladder going to challenge the individual's perception of his or her authority? Will the position tend to enhance authority or will it diminish it? Will it make it harder for the person to carry out the job? Acceptance by building and district administrators rests upon the belief that the job enlargement version of career ladder will benefit or enhance the administrator or the position. The benefit must be real not philosophical. Principals must feel that the program will help their school in its daily operation in one of two ways. That is, the person holding the career ladder position has a direct effect upon students through the work he or she is doing. Or the work of the career ladder person is helping the principal achieve some of the goals he or she has set for the building. Thus in some way the career ladder position is making the principal more effective in doing the job assigned and without the career ladder position the work would still be there and just fall upon the principal to get done. Without this feeling on the part of the principal, a job enlargement career ladder model will appear to the principal to be more work with no personal benefit.

Teachers. The third group who must accept the job enlargement model is the teacher group. In the teacher culture there are really two groups - the formal group which is the union, and the informal which is the critical mass of teachers.

Acceptance of the career ladder is based upon the premise that there is something in it for the group or the individual. The teacher view is no different than the view of the other groups mentioned before. In this case the formal must have at least a neutral view of the concept.

The basic concept of a career ladder is opposed to the normal union view of the teaching profession. The union view is one of equality and sameness. All teachers work equally as hard; all teachers are equally as good; a teacher's duties are basically the same; and all teachers deserve to share equally in the dollars going to education. Differentiating responsibilities and the compensation for those responsibilities makes it difficulty for a union to meet its objectives of providing comparable benefits for all. A career ladder means that some get something that someone else does not. It adds a degree of competitiveness among equals - something which is opposite to equality.

In most instances, union acceptance and encouragement will not come quickly. What is critical is neutrality at the start and acceptance or at least a willingness to explore by the informal group - the critical mass of teachers.

The critical policy issue for teachers is involvement. A critical mass of teachers must be positively affected by the program and receive the benefits from the program - both monetary benefits and job satisfaction benefits. A critical mass of line teachers will stem or dull union opposition and give the program a chance to become established.

Fusion of all three groups. It is the fusion of the perception of all three groups - board, administration and teachers - that they are each benefiting directly from the job enlargement and not at the expense of the other that makes for an accepted program.

Meaningful Work

The type of work to be performed and the view held by the three critical groups - board, administration and teachers of the intrinsic value of that work must be addressed.

The critical mass of teachers - both those performing the job enlargement functions and those teachers who receive the benefits of the work - must view the work as essential and as a contribution to the central mission of the school. If the career ladder teacher does not feel the work he or she is performing is valuable, this dissatisfaction will be transmitted to others. This dissatisfaction will cause others to take action - either to do away with the program or modify the type of work being performed. The degree of

acceptance of the career ladder program by the three groups will dictate the type of action taken.

A critical element in the acceptance of the job enlargement aspect of career ladder is that the work that career ladder teachers are doing must not be perceived by non career ladder teachers as causing them more work or knocking them out of opportunities that they have had in the past to earn additional money.

Once a job enlargement model is accepted all additional work asked of any teacher whether career ladder or not is now worthy of extra pay. Gone are the days of volunteer work.

Principals and central office administrators must see the work justifying the additional dollars in a personal way. The work must relate to what they consider meaningful duties that would not otherwise be accomplished. However, the issue of whose work is being performed is critical. The work must be viewed as "teacher work" and not "administrator's work." Otherwise, the job enlargement program will be seen as a way just to increase administration within the district by the teachers.

The board's view of the work performed will be colored greatly by the teachers and administrators with whom they talk. In addition, it will be colored by the perception of the general public. Public perception of the work is affected not so much by the type of work but by two things.

The first is what they hear about the value of the work as told to them by their "teacher friends." The second is when the work is being performed and the amount of inconvenience it causes to them. An example of this is if school is let out in the middle of the year and teachers are paid to work on that day without kids present. The issue - can teachers perform meaningful work when kids are not in school? In other words, the nature and meaning of teaching is being addressed.

Congruence in the goals or purposes of the work being performed must exist among the three parties - board, administration and teachers.

Meaningful Compensation For The Enlarged Job.

The compensation for the job must be of sufficient magnitude that it is worth the while of the teacher to perform the work. There must be a balance between the compensation and the contribution being made. If this is out of balance the credibility of one or the other will be called into question. Too little compensation will question the whole meaning of career ladder. It will create a competition between what can be earned in a second job and what the organization is willing to pay for the enlarged job.

A secondary policy issue which arises as result of job enlargement is compensation for others who work with career

ladder teachers and are being paid at a different rate. The issue is the typical union issue of equality. We are all the same and therefore should be compensated the same.

Security Without Institutionalization

The term career signifies something which a person has chosen to pursue for a period of time. In developing a job enlargement career ladder model the issue of how long a person gets to keep the position becomes a critical issue to the program being accepted. The duration of the enlarged job must be sufficiently long enough that a person is not forced to reapply yearly. Yet at the same time, these jobs cannot develop into such an institutional structure that once a person get a position it becomes a right until retirement.

Developing a balance between security of the position for a reasonable amount of time and a health degree of competitiveness to continually earn the position because of job performance is important to a balanced program.

In many respects the competitive aspect of a career ladder program is counter to the teaching culture and most certainly to the union view of teaching. The reason is that direct competition for rewards or production is not built into the teaching profession. The norm is egalitarian in nature. All perform the same job; all are equally as good;

and all deserve the same benefits.

Operational Or Procedural Issues

Operational or procedural policy issues are numerous and will continue to arise as a career ladder program is implemented. However, there are several critical issues that must be addressed initially in order to make a program operational and accepted by those for whom the program is built.

Some of the more critical operational issues which should be addressed as early as possible are:

* the ladder height,
* eligibility to apply for a career position
* selection process for career ladder positions

The Ladder Height

Human organization seems to be built upon a hierarchy and each hierarchy has a limit to the number of levels that make it up. So it must be for a career ladder. Just as no tree can grow to the sky, no career ladder can have an infinite number of rungs on it. Therefore, a critical decision must be how many rungs will there be to the career ladder a district chooses to design. The answer is quite simple - no more than there are legitimate jobs. In other words, it goes back to one of the philosophical issues - meaningful

work. If meaningful tasks can not be defined don't create the rung.

Implicit in the concept of a rung in the job enlargement model is the idea that the jobs are defined by written job descriptions. These job descriptions must define the duties expected, when they are to be fulfilled, and the amount of time allocated to carry out the task. Adjustments to the allocated time must be made if the tasks change. The ability to adjust the time allocation helps to assure that the job enlargement concept will not be viewed as a giveaway program. This again reaffirms the concept that the work is meaningful and valued.

For example, in Salt Lake City we have five rungs on our ladder. The first is the teacher who does not have career ladder status.

The second rung of the ladder is called career teacher. This teacher is eligible for the performance bonus. The performance bonus is simply a form of merit pay. It results from a good evaluation and submitting "lines of evidence." This is unique to the Utah model of career ladder. The amount of the bonus is determined by the number of teachers awarded this status. All teachers must achieve this level in order to be able to apply for the job enlargement rungs of the ladder. If a teacher is accepted for the job enlargement portion of the ladder they are not eligible to receive any performance bonus.

The third is teacher specialist. This teacher will work four additional days and receive a stipend of $1,200 for job enlargement activities. These activities are defined by the building based upon a needs assessment conducted yearly at the school. Its major focus is on curriculum enhancement.

The fourth is the high risk educator. This is a summer teaching position in the district's free summer school program. The position carries 30 additional days of teaching at the teacher's per deim rate.

The fifth rung of the ladder is call teacher leader. This rung is building based. Its major focus is on instructional improvement. The position receives a stipend of $1,500 and 20 additional days pay.

Eligibility To Apply For A Career Position

There are two areas that should be considered when addressing the eligibility issue.

Career teacher evaluation system. The first is the evaluation system by which teachers are judged as having the skills to be called a career educator. What will be looked at in order to judge a teacher a career teacher? Will people other than the principal be involved in the identification process? How often will the teacher have to go through the evaluation process to demonstrate that he or she is a career educator? A final question related to this issue which needs to be addressed early in the definition of

the program is "What will be the relationship between the career ladder evaluation and the evaluation process by which a teacher is deemed competent to be employed another year?" If the relationship between the two are not carefully considered one could conceivably find himself or herself in the situation where a person has just been evaluated as having career ladder status and at the same time be considered for non renewal of contract. In order to avoid this situation the various roles of those involved in the evaluation process must be clearly defined and the relationship of eligibility for job enlargement to job retention spelled out very carefully. Not to address this directly will cause problems in the future in acceptance of the status of a job enlargement teacher.

Availability of positions. When a career ladder position becomes available within a building who can apply? The answer to this question is the second issue under the title of eligibility that must be answered at the onset of making a job enlargement program operational. Will the positions only be available to teachers in the building where the position is open? Or, can any teacher in the district with career ladder status apply for the position? The answers that are chosen depend upon the view of the world of those making the policy decisions. That is, if the view is that only those in a building can apply it communicates a clear message about the view of competitiveness and egalitarianism held by those making the policy decisions.

Selection Process For Career Ladder Positions

Who selects the teachers for the job enlargement positions? The answer to this question will communicate to teachers, administrators and the board for whom the career ladder program has been designed. If at the building level the principal is the only one who must be involved by policy then the program is an administrative program and not a teacher program. Involvement of teachers in the selection process is critical if the program is to be viewed as teacher oriented. For example, in Salt Lake job enlargement teachers are selected by a school team comprised of the principal and two teachers who have not applied for any of the open positions. It takes two votes to be selected for the position one of which must be the principal. This is done so as to avoid the positions from becoming administrative appointments.

Summary

There are a multitude of policy issues that must be addressed as a district contemplates implementing a job enlargement model of career ladder. Issues will continually be faced but there are certain issues which need to be addressed at the start if the program is to be implemented successfully. These are acceptance of:

* different responsibilities and level of compensation in a system that is traditionally and strongly egalitarian.

* a system which has competition among teachers who normally only compete for a position at the time of the initial hire.

* a system which has limited security for the position and must be earned by performance and acceptance by peers.

* a system which may at the onset have limited acceptance by the union.